

Take Heed What You Hear

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It's often been said that in prayer, we have the opportunity to speak to God. We open up our heart to Him and talk to God. But in study, that is God's opportunity to speak to us. We understand God and understand more about God by studying His words that are directed to us. Let's go to 2 Timothy 2:15. We will look at just the first part of that verse as an introduction. This is a command, an admonishment. It's an encouragement to us.

2 Timothy 2:15. *Study to show yourself approved unto God ... (KJV)*

The Greek word for "study" is Strong's 4704 and it simply means *to make an effort, to be diligent or to labor*. It obviously is referring to, among other things, being diligent and to labor in our study of God's word.

Let's see what God's word is for us. Let's go to Psalm 119:5. This is one of the reasons we study God's word. It's a very important reason. We will get into some more later. Notice what God's word is to us, as the fallible and the weak of the world.

Psalm 119:5. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (KJV)*

What David is saying is that, "Without your word, God, I don't know the way; I don't know the path; I can't put one foot in front of another and have it turn out alright unless I do it your way." So putting these two scriptures together tells us that we have to labor in the study of God's word so that it directs our path in life.

Let's go back to 2 Timothy 2:15. It says ...

2 Timothy 2:15. *Study to show yourself approved ... (KJV)*

The Greek word is "approved." It's Strong's 1384. It's a word we've covered many times, the Greek word "dokimos." It was used in coinage and it means *acceptable currency after a sale*. After the currency, the coin is assayed properly to determine the weight and purity of the metal. If it is legitimate and approved, then it's a dokimos coin. The word really means *approved and acceptable after examination*. So the message is to be an acceptable and legitimate Christian. We have to study God's word diligently.

However, Christ gives us a serious warning about our study. This is the main scripture that we will be going back and forth to during the sermon. Let's go to Mark, chapter 4. Christ is teaching by the sea. This is out of the New King James Version. It just renders the English a little better. We're doing this just to get the context.

Mark 4:1. *And again He [Jesus Christ] began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. (NKJV)*

As you know, most beaches taper down toward the water. There could be rock there for people to sit on or at least a slanted surface so it was kind of like a natural amphitheater. If you know anything about sound, the main sound we get, of course, is the direct sound, but Christ knew if there was water on the floor so to speak, the sound from His voice would bounce off the water and also be reflected to the audience. So it was like having an amplified speaker system or a microphone or a megaphone to make sure His words were heard by the people. So He was in the boat with a bit of water between Him and the people and they were on this slanted area of the beach listening to Him.

2) Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: (NKJV)

In verses 3 through 8 is the Parable of the Sower. That is a sermon in itself. We covered it years ago. That's not part of the subject today.

In verse 9 He gives the first warning, talking about studying to show yourself approved.

9) And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (NKJV)

He had just finished the parable.

10) But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. (NKJV)

We see that the twelve were there plus His close, dedicated other disciples were with the twelve, and when they were alone (the big crowd wasn't there) they asked Him privately, "What is the meaning? What are you trying to tell us?" In verses 11 through 20, Christ explains to them the meaning of the parable. Now go to verse 21.

21) Also He said to them [disciples, the twelve alone, privately] "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? (NKJV)

He draws that analogy and then He explains in verse 22.

22) For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light." (NKJV)

Now the context is the meaning of the parable. What He is saying is, "The meaning of the parable I have made apparent to you, like a lampstand out in the open."

Then in verse 23 He gives a second warning.

23) If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” (NKJV)

Then we immediately come to a third warning, but it’s a different warning.

24) Then He said to them [His close disciples, privately], “Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you [It will come back to you]; and to you who hear, more will be given.

25) For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.” (NKJV)

We see here that Christ gave three warnings in the early part of His ministry to be very, very careful.

Twice He says, “If you have ears to hear, you better hear.” Then the question is, “Hear what?”

The third warning addresses that. “Take heed what you hear.”

What we want to do in the sermon today is analyze what Christ meant by this third warning.

The title of the sermon is:

Take Heed What You Hear

First we want to analyze these verses in detail and then we want to cover four points that will help us take heed what we hear.

Let’s look at these verses in detail beginning in Mark 4.

Mark 4:24. *Then He said to them, “Take heed what you hear ... (NKJV)*

The New Living Translation says: *“Be sure to pay attention to what you hear.”*

The apostles, who were right there, heard directly from Christ, face to face. We don’t have that blessing today. Christ was reminding them, “Listen to Me. Do not listen to false words. Don’t listen to other people’s words that don’t originate from Me.” That is something we should be very careful about. It’s not wrong to hear another person speak. But we have to make sure that those words that are spoken by another person are Christ’s words that originate with Him. Remember in Matthew 24:11, Christ said that many false prophets shall arise and deceive many. He knew that was coming and He said to take heed and pay attention to what you hear.

We hear God's words from several sources. We hear God's words from personal study. They leap off the page. Christ is the God of the Old Testament; we read Christ's words in the New Testament; we read the apostle's words amplifying Christ's words in the New Testament. Then situations like now or at the Feast or the holy days we hear the spoken word during worship services.

However, there is a clear warning from Christ that we can hear false things also. We can hear poisonous things. We can have false information. There was false information at the time of Christ. There were all kinds of false doctrines that were swirling around at the time of Christ. Certainly by the time of the first century church, the time of the apostles and the 100s, 200s and 300s there was all kinds of false information and false doctrines. But there are even more today. The reason is because of the communication ability that is available today, especially the internet. You can find anything on the internet. You can find the wackiest, crazy stuff on the internet. So Christ's admonition in the beginning of verse 24 applies to us even more because we have more opportunity to hear false things.

24b) ... With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you... (NKJV)

What does He mean by that? The Greek word "measure" is Strong's 3358 and its "metron." We get our English word "meter" from that. The definition is literally or figuratively *a measure*. A meter is a measure of length. Strong's says it can also mean, by implication, *degree*. In other words, to what degree we hear it will come back to us. If we are very careful in the degree we hear, it will come back to us. If we have a degree of discernment in what we hear, it will come back to us. If we have a degree of putting into practice what we hear, it will come back to us. On the other hand, if we are careless in what we hear, Christ says, "I'll be careless with you. If you won't be careful with My word, I won't be careful with you. That's kind of a shaky warning to us.

In the latter part of verse 24 and the beginning of verse 25, remember that men put in the verse breaks and the beginning of verse 25 is actually one thought from verse 24.

24 continued) ... and to you who hear, more will be given.

25) For whoever has, to him more will be given ... (NKJV)

The New Living Translation says,

24) ... "The more you do this (being careful of what you hear) the more you will understand, and even more besides.

25) To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. (NLT)

In other words, more hearing will be given and that hearing will lead to greater understanding. That greater understanding will lead to greater wisdom.

So we see here that Christ warns us to take heed what we hear. Whatever measure we use in hearing it, it will come back to us, either for good or for bad. So the onus is on us to really pay attention to what we hear.

In the remainder of the time, let's look very carefully at four keys that will help us take heed how we hear and what we hear.

Key No. 1: We have to study God's word daily.

I can't emphasize this enough. The Bible tells us so. Why daily? The reason is because our spiritual mind has to be renewed daily. Just like our spiritual body has to be fed daily. We know the consequences of fasting, but our spiritual mind has to be fed daily. Let's go to Romans 12:2. Paul is warning the brethren. They had to contend with the Roman Empire and all the paganism. Frankly, we have to contend with a lot more today. It's just unbelievable, because whatever is out in the world comes to us with communications, television, the internet, etc.

Romans 12:2. *And be not conformed to this world [can't do it]: but be you transformed [changed] by the renewing of your mind ... (KJV)*

The Greek word for "renewing" can also mean *renovation*. If we renovate a room and put new paint, wallpaper, new flooring, new molding and all of that, you make the room new. You don't recognize it from the old room. It's a brand new room.

He is saying you can be transformed by the renovation of your mind.

2b) ... that you may prove ... (KJV)

One way we prove it is by our study.

2 continued) ... what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Remember David said, "Your word is a light to my path." So by studying God's word, we can understand His will for us in various circumstances that we encounter. Our mind has to be renovated or renewed from the old to the new, the old meaning the way before we came into the church, and the new is being ready to marry Jesus Christ. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 4:16. Paul tells the Corinthian Church and, by extension, to us today that that mind, the spiritual mind has to be renewed daily.

2 Corinthians 4:16. *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish ... (KJV)*

As we get older, we understand that in spades. We get weaker and saggy and our acuity, our strength and stamina is not what it used to be.

16b) ... yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (KJV)

One of the ways we renew the inward man is through study to know and learn about God and His ways.

Why must the inward man be renewed daily? Why can't we skip a few days? Why can't we study a couple of times a month, or once a week or something like that? Well, we know who our adversary is and Satan doesn't take days off. Satan doesn't give us a break. Satan doesn't say, "I'll just leave him alone for a while." Satan doesn't do that, not at all.

As a young deacon back in the late '60s and early '70s, we were in Boston and a minister there that I highly respect, made a profound statement to me that I have never forgotten. He said, "There is nothing permanent about a spiritual mind in a physical body." That means once we are baptized and have that seed planted in us, it is not permanent. It is up to us whether it stays or goes away. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 tells us very clearly that the holy spirit can be quenched by us. If we don't feed it, if we don't nurture it, if we don't take care of it, if we do not renew the holy spirit daily, it goes away. By studying daily, it helps feed the holy spirit, because we have God's words from His very mind coming into our mind.

I've known ministers and brethren who have gone weeks and months without study with perilous results. I remember a minister that left the church back in the '70s when it was just unheard of and this minister said, "I haven't prayed and I haven't studied for months." Then it's no surprise when his mind changes and he didn't want any part of the church and he just left. Brethren too, we either spiritually feed ourselves through daily study or we spiritually starve and we ultimately die. It's just like our physical bodies. Our physical bodies are perfect examples.

Dorothy and I were on the way back from Canada listening to the radio and we were listening to a song by Karen Carpenter. She and her brother were in a group called "The Carpenters." She had a marvelous, clear and beautiful voice. The sad thing is she had anorexia and she slowly starved herself to death. Her vital organs began to fail and she just died. It was such a sad thing to see this beautiful young girl with a beautiful voice, and she just killed herself. That's a good example of what we can do to ourselves spiritually. God has called us and given us His spirit. He has forgiven our sins, we have His very nature inside of us and yet we just starve it to death. We can do that if we don't study daily. That's the first point.

Key No. 2: We must diligently and intensely study God's word.

Let's understand there's a difference between reading God's word and studying God's word. It's not wrong to read God's word, but God also wants us to diligently study it and look into it and dissect it so that we understand it to a greater depth. I'm here to tell you there are scriptures that the more you study, the more you learn about those scriptures. It's like peeling the layers of an onion, just new understanding comes, but we have to put in the effort. Let's go back to 2 Timothy 15. We were there in the introduction. Let's

add to that the understanding of the word “study” because Thayer’s Lexicon says this about the word “study:” *to exert oneself or give diligence*. It also means to *make haste, to hurry up*. Looking at the times we’re living in, we don’t have a lot of time left to study God’s word, so we must make haste and give diligence to study God’s word, not just casually read but intensely study.

2 Timothy 2:15. *Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)*

The word “workman” is Strong’s 2040, and it means literally *a toiler*. Figuratively it can mean *a teacher*. So it can be translated *toiler, laborer and workman*. In other words, we should study God’s word like a workman does his job. He sweats over it and puts energy into it and that tells us by this analogy that we need to diligently study God’s word. Then during the study, you rightly divide the word of truth. What on earth is he talking about there? That’s Strong’s 3718 and means literally to *make a straight cut*. Say you’re cutting a two by four and you cut it absolutely straight. That’s what the word literally means and figuratively it means to *dissect correctly*. You remember back to maybe your high school biology class and you dissected a frog. It means to *dissect or separate correctly*. Zodhiates says, *to handle correctly, skillfully, to correctly teach the word of truth*. It’s interesting he says “teach,” to handle correctly, skillfully, to correctly teach the word of truth. So this clearly implies that we must exert ourselves to correctly understand God’s word, the word of truth. It takes effort. Zodhiates intimated that the point is that we should study God’s word enough that we could actually teach it. Look at verses 1 and 2. We’re all in the same context here.

2 Timothy 2:1. *Thou therefore, my son [Paul talking to Timothy], be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

2) And the things that you hast heard of me [his teachings] among many witnesses, the same [words] commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (KJV)

I think we all know that it’s one thing to study a subject, but it’s entirely different thing to know it well enough to teach others. I think we’ve all been in the situation where we thought we understood the subject, and then when we get in the position to explain it to someone, we can’t. We realize that we don’t know it well enough to explain it to someone else. There’s a huge difference between those two, to study a subject and then to know it well enough to teach it. That’s what Paul is saying to Timothy. You have to study His words and know them so you can teach them to others and they can teach others and in this way God’s word is passed down from generation to generation, parents teaching their kids and kids teaching their kids.

When we intensely and diligently study God’s word, those words are put there so we can do that. They are there for our learning. They also become a great comfort in times of trial, like losing a mate, or when someone is facing a life threatening. Look at Romans 15:4. These words were written for a reason. They are there for specific reasons that pertain to us today.

Romans 15:4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning ... (KJV)*

So we can learn them and then teach them.

4b) ... that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (KJV)

We learn about God, but it also gives us hope when life gets tough. So we see here that this second key is that we must intensely and diligently study God's word.

Key No. 3: We must ask for more of the holy spirit before we start to study so that our study is directed and our mind is open to what God is trying to teach us.

We all realize that to understand God's word, we must have the holy spirit. I can't tell you the number of people that have said, "Before God called me, I read the Bible and it was just a bunch of gibberish. It didn't make any sense." Then God threw the switch. He put His spirit with them and they began to understand. Things started to fit together and that was due to the working of the holy spirit. Look at John 14: 25-26. This is Christ's last night as a physical human being. He was trying to impart urgent teachings to the disciples because He was going away.

John 14:25. *"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. 26) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name ... (NKJV)*

We all understand that this should be translated "it."

26b) it will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (NKJV)

So if the holy spirit will teach us all things, why should we not get on our knees and ask God to teach us all things to open our minds before we study and open our minds to what we should study, what God wants us to learn? Without using the holy spirit, we can and will be misled. We've all seen that. People have gone coo-coo studying God's word. It has happened. We must ask for the holy spirit before we study and ask for it while we study. Let's go to Luke 11. The context is the outline for prayer. We will see that this outline for prayer can also apply to study. Christ is saying:

Luke 11:9. *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10) For every one that asks receives ... (KJV)*

Think of this in relation to study. Everyone that asks receives.

10b) ... and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks ... (KJV)

Trying to have a door opened for further understanding.

10 continued) ... it shall be opened. (KJV)

He draws an analogy now.

11) If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12) Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13) If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ... (KJV)

You wouldn't do that. You know how to give good gifts to your children.

13b) ... how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (KJV)

The holy spirit can guide our study. Let's think about this. If we ask God for the holy spirit to guide our study tonight, how could He refuse? How on earth as a loving Father could He refuse someone who diligently asks, "God, I want to understand this subject. Please guide me." How could He refuse?

The point is that we need to ask for more of God's spirit to open our minds to what He is trying to teach us, to guide us in what we study and guide us in putting it all together which leads to more understanding. In other words, it leads to better hearing of His word.

Key No. 4: We must have a right attitude and a right motivation for study.

I cannot over emphasize this point. We must have a right attitude and a right motivation for our study. Here He is talking to His disciples privately.

Mark 4:24. *And he said unto them, Take heed what you hear ... (KJV)*

If you look at the Greek word "what," it has an interesting meaning. Its Strong's 5101 and it says: *an interrogative pronoun meaning "why."* So Christ says: "Take heed not only what you hear, but why you hear it." Therefore, it can also mean: Take heed why you hear. Look at your attitude and motivation of why I am studying. What is my point in doing this? What am I trying to accomplish? What is my attitude?

Under this fourth key, we're going to look at two wrong attitudes or motivations for study and then we will follow up with two correct attitudes and motivations for study.

First Wrong Motivation: We study to fulfill a sense of duty.

I have been guilty of this. We feel we are duty bound to study God's word. Guilt is a great motivator. It sure is in my life. In the early days, if I didn't study, I felt guilty and my guilt motivated me to study. It's easy to look at study (and prayer too for that matter) as a chore that needs to be done. It's like taking out the garbage or washing the dishes or vacuuming the house. It's something to be accomplished in the daily conduct of life. But like a chore, sometimes our mind is somewhere else. We're doing the chore, but our mind is on something that we really want to do later on, something that is far more pleasurable or something we would like to do.

Let me ask this. If we love God with all our heart (Luke 10:27) will we study because we have to or because we want to? One of the wrong motivations of study is we study because we have to. It's a chore to be done. It's not something to be relished, just something to get through in the conduct of the day.

That's one wrong motivation for study.

Second Wrong Motivation: We can study for selfish reasons.

We can study selfishly to prove a pet doctrine. I've seen this over and over again. Somebody studies to come up with some new truth or pet doctrine and the reality is that they are doing the study to elevate the self. "Look at what I've discovered. I've got some new truth. God's light is shining on me and I know more than all of you, so you follow me and listen to me because I'm a scholar. I'm a guru." They study for selfish reasons.

We can study also to prove ourselves right. They study over some argument about scripture. So we're not studying with an open mind to get the truth; we're studying to prove ourselves right. Remember Proverbs 21:2.

Proverbs 21:2. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD ponders the hearts. (KJV)

We study with that in mind to prove ourselves correct to win an argument, to elevate ourselves over another person.

That is another wrong motivation to study. It's to elevate the self, to be perceived as a scholar.

Look at what Christ said in Matthew 23:1. This whole chapter is devoted to Christ railing on the scribes and Pharisees because their motivations were all selfish. He was basically telling His disciples, "Don't you do it that way." He's trying to teach them a lesson.

Matthew 23:1. Then spoke Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

- 2) *Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:*
- 3) *All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not after their works: for they say, and do not. (KJV)*

They don't apply it to themselves. They apply it to everybody but themselves.

We've seen that in the Worldwide Church of God. We've seen teachers and ministers that correctly speak the scriptures, but they don't live those scriptures. They don't apply them to themselves.

- 4) *For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*
- 5) *But all their works they do [why?] for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,*
- 6) *And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,*
- 7) *And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. (KJV)*

That is Strong's 4461. It's of Hebrew origin and it means *my master*. They do all of these things. They go to rabbinical school and they study, and their goal is not to elevate God or teach God's way. Their goal is to be called "master." "Look at me. Come to me and I will tell you what you should be doing, not God, but I will."

Christ later said in Matthew 23:

Matthew 23:12. *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (KJV)*

God is concerned about what motivates our study. I knew a man back in the Worldwide days. He was upset with the ministry. He was a closet scholar. He wanted to be elevated and looked at. He attended the church I was in at the time. He studied to prove the church wrong. He studied with the notion that whatever the church says here, "I know it's wrong and I'm going to prove something else to show that I know more than the folks that teach at Ambassador College and the ministry." In other words, he had a predetermined doctrine he wanted to prove. He already knew what the doctrine was; the problem was just trying to figure it out so he could prove it. We were sitting in his living room and he said, "I know this is right, but I just haven't figured out how yet to prove it." He already knew the conclusion. What he really meant was, "I know what I want to prove, but I haven't twisted the scriptures enough to make it happen." That's what he really was saying. Now after all these years, he is a church of one. He is by himself with his own pet doctrines and he got there by having the wrong motivation, the wrong attitude behind his study. We need to have the correct motivation and attitude.

Now the two correct motivations to study.

First Motivation to Study: Study to know God and Christ.

This alluded me for about twenty-five to thirty years.

If we love God and Christ with all our hearts, we would want to get to know more about them. Look at John 17:3. Christ is at the end of His physical life. This should be the focal point of our study

John 17:3. *And this is eternal life ... (NKJV)*

If somebody says, "I'm going to tell you what life eternal is." Our ears should perk up and the antennae should go up. He says:

3b) *... that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (NKJV)*

If we want eternal life, we have to know who they are, because we're going to marry one of them. We'd better know who we are going to marry.

Philippians 2:5. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, (NKJV)*

How can we do that if we don't know what His mind is? We have to study to understand the mind of Christ. We can't be like them unless we really know who they are. That comes through diligent study over time.

Let me give you a personal example. I came into the church in the mid-60s, right out of the military. I went to military school four years before that. The church at that time emphasized obedience and the wrath of God if anyone stepped out of line. They emphasized the punishment on mankind for how lousy mankind is, on breaking God's law and the horrible stuff in the tribulation that people were going to go through. So coming into the church, I began to perceive God as a harsh God, a cut-no-slack God and unforgiving God. We ran away from the protestant teaching at the time which was way at the other end, which was you can do anything you want, once saved always saved, love, love, love. God loves us and we love God so we can be reprobates and somehow God will say that's okay, wave a magic wand and we're raptured away or whatever. The church and Mr. Armstrong ran away from that. So the emphasis was on obedience and the consequences of disobedience. The thought of a loving God was off. There was no emphasis on that. I've been in the church for almost fifty years and it took me thirty years to work my way through this. In the last twenty years through study and looking at God's word, the more I study, the more I understand God's love for us and for His children. He never does anything for our harm. Everything He causes or allows is for our benefit. But it took me almost three decades to come to that realization. The harsh part, the obedient and discipline part fit my background, so I just glommed onto it and ran with it.

If we ask God to show us His nature, He will. He will show us His true nature. God is not a harsh God. I can remember (I think I mentioned it before) that I was busy at work on a Friday and the sun was going down and I got caught in something and lost my concentration for about five minutes. I looked outside and couldn't see the sun. I couldn't see the shadows. I just dropped what I was doing, ran out of the store and went to the car. I was in a panic. I could just barely see the last glimmer of the sun in the west. I got into my car and my heart was racing. I just had this feeling that if I had been two or three minutes later, a bolt of lightening would fry me to a crisp because this harsh God was waiting with the hammer or sickle just to cut me to pieces when I stepped across the line. That was my image of God. That was a year or two since baptism.

Over time, we come to see and know God and Christ, and everything they do is motivated by love and wanting us to be in His kingdom and wanting us to have eternal life, wanting us to know and love them.

So the first correct motivation for study is that we've got to study to know God and Christ as they truly are as revealed in the Bible.

Second Motivation to Study: To change ourselves.

Not to exalt ourselves, but we study to change ourselves. Human nature despises and rejects correction. We've all been there, regardless of the correction. Perhaps sitting before your boss or something, he says, "I need to talk to you. You need to change your behavior." The shield goes up and the arms cross. We just don't want to hear it. You get your hackles up ready to defend the self.

Look at Jeremiah 7:28. Christ, the God of the Old Testament, is characterizing the nation of Judah which pertains to us because we have the same human nature that they did.

***Jeremiah 7:28.** But you shall say unto them [Judah], This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receives correction ... (KJV)*

They won't receive it. They don't want to hear it.

28b) ... truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. (KJV)

They don't want correction from God's word. They didn't want correction from the men God sent to correct them. It's just part of human nature.

Look at Proverbs 15:10. Solomon understood this and through the inspiration of Christ, the God of the Old Testament, He is trying to get it across to us.

***Proverbs 15:10.** Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way ... (NKJV)*

If we get off track and forsake the way and we don't want to hear correction that will get us back on track.

10b) ... And he who hates correction will die.

We can't go there.

32) He that refuses instruction despises his own soul: but he that hears reproof gets understanding. (KJV)

If we look at the Bible and see what it says and we apply it to ourselves and make changes, we get more understanding. It's coming back to us. We're taking heed to what we hear and why we hear it. You see, the converted mind wants correction. Look at Jeremiah 10:24. We were in chapter 7 a while ago.

Jeremiah 10:24. *O LORD, correct me ... (KJV)*

He's asking for correction, but smart man that he was, he has a caveat here, a disclaimer. He says:

24b) ... but with judgment ... (KJV)

The Hebrew word for "judgment" means *discretion*. "Take it easy on me. I don't want you to overpower me."

24 continued) ... not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. (KJV)

He says, "I want correction, but have mercy." We need to do that. I learned the hard way. We have to ask for mercy when we ask for correction and God will grant that. Let's go to a familiar scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16. Paul is teaching young Timothy about scripture and the purpose for scripture. Part of the purpose for scripture, as we're going to see, is for correction. Paul says:

2 Timothy 3:16. *All scripture ... (KJV)*

The only scripture they had at that time was what we call the Old Testament. For us, it's the Old and the New Testament.

16b) ... is given by inspiration of God [God breathed, as the Greek says], and is profitable for doctrine [teaching], for reproof ... (KJV)

The Greek word for "reproof" is *evidence*. Reproof means to have evidence of something. So God gives us evidence through the Bible. The fact that He exists is the evidence that the Bible gives.

16 continued) ... for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (KJV)

The NLT has a great translation of verse 16.

16) All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives [a good way to put it]. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. (NLT)

That's God's word. Our prime motivation, other than knowing God and Jesus Christ, is to correct ourselves, our attitudes, our thoughts, our words and deeds. We need to study to see God and Christ as they are so that we can look at them as they are and accurately look at ourselves, compare the two and see what changes we need to make to be more like the Father and the Son.

Let's go to Ephesians 4. It goes back to this concept of renewing the mind spiritually.

Ephesians 4:22. *That you put off concerning the former conversation [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;*
23) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
24) And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (KJV)

So the second motivation of proper study is to study to correct ourselves, to renew the spirit of our mind. But that means to be the new person, not the old person. The new person is more like God and Jesus Christ. If we want to be there at the marriage supper, Christ is not going to marry someone He can't recognize. Christ is not going to marry someone who is not like Him. We can't expect Him to do that. So in order to prepare to be the Bride of Christ, we have to become like Christ in every way, and study is the way to get us there. If we have the right motivation and attitude, it is a key to taking heed of what we hear and why we hear it.

In conclusion, we've seen some keys today to take heed what we hear and to take heed why we hear.

Let's close with a warning from Christ. Let's go to Mark 4 and verse 25 out of the New Living Translation. We read this earlier, but we're going to emphasize the latter part of the verse rather than the first part.

Mark 4:25. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given ... (NLT)

Notice this last part.

25b) ... But for those who are not listening ... (NLT)

The King James would say "heeding."

25 continued) ... even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.” (NLT)

I have seen this so many times of people not studying with the right attitude, not heeding, not applying it to themselves, not trying to get to know God and Christ as they truly are. What happens over time is they drift farther away from the truth, farther and farther away from the trunk of the tree.

I was talking to Greg Gaetzman last week, and he was concerned about this one individual and needed to get some information from another individual and that other individual belongs to a different group. I won't say what group. He called this other individual and Greg introduced himself. He didn't say he was a minister. He said that he was a graduate of Ambassador College and he asked about the other individual. This man lit into him right away and said, "Why don't you quit and come with us? God is only working with us and nobody else." This went on for a little while and Greg said, "I work with a lot of God's people, and they study and pray and love God with all their heart, they love their neighbor as themselves and they are changing to be more like Jesus Christ. I see that every day. So I see that as a proof that where I am, I'm in the right place." Greg asked this other fellow, "What proof do you have? You just claimed that God is only working with you. What proof do you have?" You know what proof he had? He said, "We know that God is working with us because we built two colleges." Where is that in the Bible? Where do we find that as evidence that God is working with you?

You see, over time, people get away from the trunk of the tree and get way off into outer space, thinking this is truth when it is absolutely not the truth. A wrong attitude in studying causes people to apply what they read to other people and not themselves.

Let's go back to Matthew 7 and begin in verse 3. This is the final scripture. Christ is knocking in the head many of their previous teachings and beliefs that they were taught.

Matthew 7:3. *And why behold thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

4) Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull out the mote [speck] out of your eye; and, behold, a beam [plank or 2x4] is in your own eye?

5) Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye ...

How can you do that if you don't know what the beam is? You don't know you have a beam and one of the prime ways, other than through inspiration of God through prayer, is through studying God's word, seeing what it says and applying it to the self. He says, "Why don't you look into my word and see what my words say and listen to me. If you do, you're going to start to see the 2 x 4 that's in your eye."

5 continued) ... and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. (KJV)

When you don't do that, he says, "You hypocrite." It's a double standard. You apply to others one thing, but not to the self. We've seen that so many times.

Christ's warning here is if we drift away, if we don't have the right attitude and motivation in study, if we don't study to know God and Christ as they truly are and go off with the wrong motivations, then after a time of not listening, not heeding, we will become completely unbalanced and become more and more weird.

My good buddy, Harold Lee; I miss him so much. We were discussing a couple of people and they were off on this doctrine that was not salvational, was not important in the grand scheme of things and yet they made it a litmus test for everybody who is a true Christian. Harold said, "Give them six months. They'll be barking at the moon." That's exactly what happens when people separate themselves from the trunk of the tree and from the truth.

So let's understand what Christ meant when He said, "Take heed what you hear," and as we found out, "Take heed why you hear it." Remember Mark 4:25.

Mark 4:25. *To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given ... (NLT)*

And boy, as we get closer to the end, all of us are going to need more understanding, which leads to more wisdom. So let's take heed what we hear and why we hear it.

